

**House Education  
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Testimony with Email - HB21-1029 Use Of READ Act Per-pupil Intervention Money**

**First Last Name Position Represer Text of Testimony**

I am in full support of this bill allowing teachers to seek alternative reading material from sources of their choosing. The bill encourages teachers to think and act independently rather than being forced to adhering to the resource choices provided them and most likely chosen by an administrator or someone who isn't even in the classroom. We need to return to the days when teachers had freedom to think out of the box in their teaching methods, style, and curriculum.

Tresa Taysom For Self



To the Members of the Colorado House Education Committee,

We write today in strong opposition to HB21-1029, which will slow and reverse the great progress the state has made in ensuring all Colorado students are able to read by the end of third grade.

Many factors affect a child's reading ability, but we know that the knowledge and skill of their teachers, and the strength of the curriculum their teachers use, are paramount to successfully mastering reading. That is why \$26.2 of the \$43.3 million dollars appropriated for early literacy programming goes directly to Local Education Providers (LEPs) as per-pupil intervention funds. It's also one of the reasons the legislature enacted SB19-199, which emphasized the critical importance of using evidence-based instructional practices in successfully implementing the READ Act and improving literacy rates among Colorado students. To ensure that all Colorado students receive high-quality reading instruction, SB19-199 explicitly forbids LEPs from using per-pupil intervention funds to purchase core instructional programming not included on the Colorado Department of Education's advisory list. ExcelinEd in Action applauds the good work of the Department in identifying the 15 strong, effective, and high-quality instructional programs currently included on this list.

When we look to other states that have insisted on providing *only* the highest-quality evidence-based instruction in reading, we see dramatic results:

- Six states with early literacy programs **improved faster than the national average** on the NAEP fourth grade reading assessment.
- Mississippi's NAEP fourth grade reading score has **increased by 11 points** since implementation.
- Ohio has seen a **12% increase in students reading on grade level** since implementation.

ExcelinEd in Action urges the committee to stay the course that the State Board, the Department, and the state legislature have worked hard to set for Colorado schools, educators, and students. We cannot allow HB21-1029 to set us back.

Sincerely,

Katie Dauphinais  
Legislative Director

Madeleine Ashour  
Senior Legislative Affairs Associate

My name is Laura Haller. I have been teaching at Rocky Mountain Prep Southwest since its founding year in 2015. This means I have been lucky enough to watch a community of kids grow up and it's been the honor of my lifetime. Along the way I've also learned and grown so much as a teacher, particularly as a reading teacher. Even after an education degree and two years under my belt I was still floundering a bit with the complexity of teaching kids how to read. Looking back now, I know the gap was teaching using the science of reading. I know because I watched it transform the lives of my kids.

In August of 2015 Javier walked into my classroom speaking only Spanish and me speaking only English. Javier loved playing soccer, quickly found a group of friends, and liked to bite the tails off the goldfish snacks. I taught Javier in Kindergarten and was lucky enough to teach him again in second grade. He had grown in Kindergarten but was barely on grade level in reading. After that he was stuck in reading. For two years we implemented a variety of reading interventions, we modified work when appropriate, and analyzing his data and creating plan after plan to catch him up.

Similarly, Michael walked into our school building the first year we opened with a big, bright smile ready for anything. Anything in Spanish that is. He spent the year loving and laughing with scholars and staff but mostly confused looking at us like... "I speak Spanish. Why are you speaking to me in English?!" Michael was always a strong mathematician, but he struggled for three years to learn English and meet grade level reading expectations.

When I moved into a special education role their third-grade year, I again was lucky enough to have these boys in my small groups. As I learned how to navigate this role I started becoming more of a phonics and reading expert with the guidance of our school reading interventionist. I went from asking Michael and Javier to practice the same skill over and over again to teaching them WHY they would read the word that way. We learned about vowels and consonants, different syllable types, and how to break up words based on English rules. Suddenly, things started clicking for Michael and Javier. **When they were explicitly taught the rules on how to read, they could read. This is what experts call the science of reading.** That year Michael made over two years of reading growth, 7 levels, which put him ON GRADE LEVEL! Javier made a full year of reading growth and went from two years behind, to only one. **We know the science of reading works—it worked for Michael and Javier—and we need to insist that schools continue to provide interventions that we know work. Evidence-based curriculum is key to this.**

As a teacher that year, Michael and Javier's stories felt unique. But now we know they weren't. As educators when we systematically, intentionally teach the **science of reading** kids grow. Reading is freedom and has now transformed these kids' lives. The science of reading is essential to this country's education system. Access to reading has developed these scholars into thoughtful, compassionate, critical thinkers and humans who have already touched my life and will most certainly change the world. It is essential that we don't experiment or "try things out" on kids because their futures depend on it and we shouldn't be taking unnecessary risks on kids' lives. We know what works and that is the science of reading! Please vote no on HB21-1029.

Thank you members of the committee for considering my testimony.

My name is Keena Day and I am the Senior Manager of Humanities (ELA, SS/History and World Languages) for DSST Public Schools. I've been *a literacy instructor for eighteen years and have taught English Language Arts all grades 6-12 and Advanced Placement literature.*

Starting out as a student teacher in Metro Nashville Public Schools in 2003, I was trained in college to acquire my secondary ELA licensure and taught both 7th and 9th grades. During that training, I was given resources and strategies for teaching literature; however, during that student teaching experience, I recognized very quickly that many of my students were not equipped with basic reading skills to be able to not only read the texts I wanted to teach, but perhaps could impact them for the rest of their adult lives. I knew that my lack of knowledge was to the detriment of my students' skills, and, ethically, I was not ok with that.

Prior to getting my first teaching job that fall, I graduated from undergrad and immediately enrolled in graduate school to study the Science of Reading instruction. Then, there were no real pathways for secondary ELA teachers, but the foundational information that I received during my graduate program gave me the tools I needed to not only support all of my students' reading abilities, but also design scaffolds or personalized instruction (such as guided reading, shared reading, and word study) to increase my students' reading abilities.

I became a high performing ELA teacher at both the middle and high school levels in the state of Tennessee, served as a state Master Teacher and trainer, and ultimately have served as a literacy coach, reading specialist, and now literacy coordinator for the administration and supervision of reading programs in secondary schools. From my experience, I have visited classrooms where teachers literally just have entered the profession with some of the same concerns and challenges I had when I was beginning my career as a teacher. The Colorado Department of Education is offering the [Science of Reading Instruction courses](#) based on the efficient suite of reading instruction and reading difficulty strategies and is exactly what is needed for teachers to understand the foundations to what makes students not only proficient readers, but also critical thinkers. In addition, with the shifts taking place in SLA instruction and Read Act expectations, our teachers must be equipped with this knowledge-- it is no longer ok for teachers to not know how students learn to read.

Our workforce is rapidly changing in this country, thus the ability to read will be a matter of survival in a few short years that will affect children who are already fighting learning loss in the midst of a pandemic. It is imperative that our teachers grades K-12 understand the basics of how students learn to read and what teachers can do individually to ensure students receive research based instruction and that it is built throughout their entire educational journey. I have had teachers at DSST sign up for the CDE trainings even though we are secondary based because we intend to improve instruction for our students immediately. I support the continued CDE trainings offered

that help me as a literacy coordinator get the professional development that our organization needs and not have to worry about scheduling trainings myself.

That's why this bill is so dangerous. It ignores what we know to be true about how kids learn to read and instead encourages districts and schools to arbitrarily choose how to do reading instruction while ignoring the science and disregarding the strategic investment Colorado has made in ensuring all teachers can effectively teach all students to read.

Please vote NO on this bill and ensure all kids continue to have access to high quality, science-based reading instruction.

Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee. My name is Kaye Taavialma. I am the mother of a sophomore and a senior at East High School in Denver, and I have been an educator for almost 20 years, working as a classroom teacher, school leader, and executive director. I learned about the science of reading and the transformational impact it can have early in my career. I have been a fierce advocate for its use in classrooms ever since.

We must recognize that a successful READ Act is only possible by requiring the use of scientifically based learning materials and curriculums in our schools. As a teacher, my colleagues and I spent hours researching and vetting curriculums because, at the time, there wasn't a trusted source telling us which tools were scientifically based. The time spent was worth it. As a school leader, I dedicated a significant portion of my budget on scientifically based training and materials for teachers. The money spent was worth it. Year after year, we saw transformational growth in teachers' ability to teach. More importantly- *most importantly*- we saw transformational growth in students' ability to read.

Teaching reading IS rocket science. There are specific and nuanced skills that students need to master and specific and nuanced gaps that teachers need to fill. The three schools I worked at served second language learners, homeless, and transient students- our mission was to close gaps. Without scientifically based materials and trainings for teachers, we would've been in the dark.

Teaching students to read without training and scientifically based curriculums is like trying to build a house with rusted tools. You can try, you will rarely be successful. Year after year, we are failing students when they are unable to make the critical and time sensitive switch from learning to read to reading to learn. By allowing the use of unapproved teaching materials you are ensuring that we will continue to fail students. How are you ok with that? Imagine what we could do if we chose to commit to and invest in what the READ Act was designed to do. At a minimum, we need to ensure every teacher is equipped with the tools and training they need to successfully serve students. Anything less is an explicit infringement on the READ Act and an abandonment of this state's responsibility to students.

We must reject this bill and require the use of scientifically based curriculums in our schools- Colorado's districts', teachers', and most importantly students' success directly depends on your vote today. I respectfully and urgently ask for your no vote on HB21- 1029.

Thank you.